

E

467

.1

M2C88

LIFE, CHARACTER,
AND
PUBLIC SERVICES
OF
GENERAL GEORGE B. McCLELLAN.

An Address

DELIVERED DECEMBER 4, 1886, AT THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC
IN PHILADELPHIA, AT THE REQUEST
OF THE

McCLELLAN MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION,
OF PHILADELPHIA,

BY
GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS.

BOSTON:
CUPPLES, UPHAM AND COMPANY,
The Old Corner Bookstore.
1887.

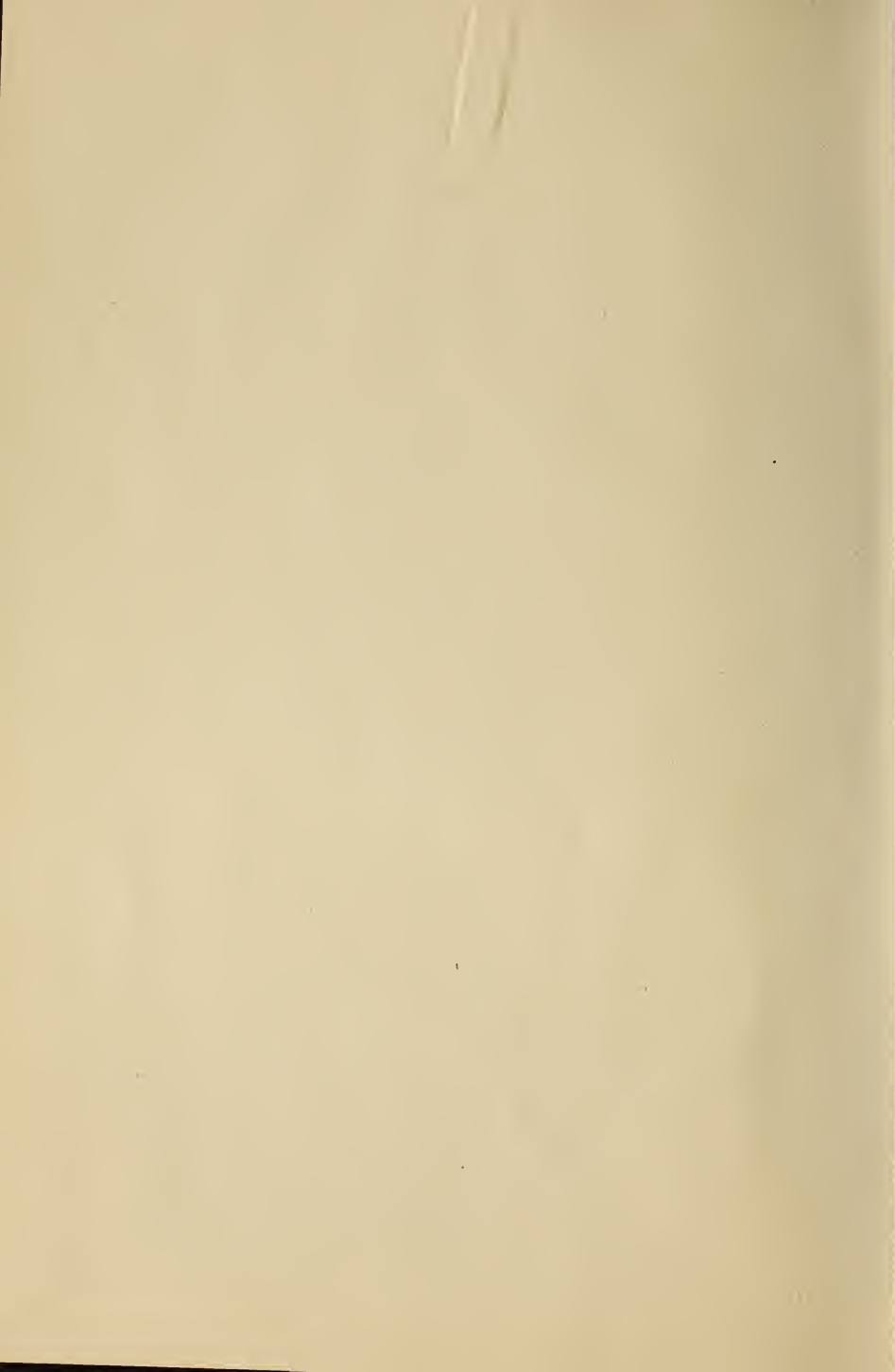


Class E 467

Book M 2¹ C 88

Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT





78 7

LIFE, CHARACTER,
AND
PUBLIC SERVICES
OF
GENERAL GEORGE B. McCLELLAN.

An Address

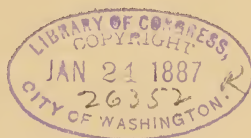
429
748

DELIVERED DECEMBER 4, 1886, AT THE ACADEMY OF MUSIC
IN PHILADELPHIA, AT THE REQUEST
OF THE

McCLELLAN MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION,
OF PHILADELPHIA,

BY ✓

GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS.
"



BOSTON:
CUPPLES, UPHAM AND COMPANY,
The Old Corner Bookstore.
1887.

E467

M¹2388

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 22, 1886.

HON. GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS.

DEAR SIR,—It having been determined to have delivered, for the benefit of the McClellan Monument Fund, an address upon the life, character, and public services of General GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, under the auspices of the McClellan Memorial Association, the undersigned have been requested to invite you to deliver the same at the Academy of Music, at such time as may be convenient to you. Your familiarity with and close study of the subject have prompted the Association to select you as pre-eminently qualified for this important task.

With great respect,

W. V. MCKEAN,
A. K. MCCLURE,
CHARLES EMORY SMITH,
WILLIAM M. SINGERLY,
JNO. WANAMAKER,
M. P. HANDY,
JOHN Y. HUBER,
M. VEALE,
CHARLES A. LAGEN.

WASHINGTON, D.C., Oct. 25, 1886.

MESSRS. W. V. MCKEAN, A. K. MCCLURE, CHARLES EMORY SMITH,
and others.

GENTLEMEN,—I have received your letter inviting me to deliver in Philadelphia an address on the life, character, and public services of General GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN, at such time as may suit my convenience. I am much occupied at this season with professional engagements;—but as General MCCLELLAN was a very dear and intimate friend of mine for more than twenty years; as his character was one most unique and remarkable; and as his services to our common country in its darkest hour were of unsurpassed importance,—I cannot decline to do anything in my power that may aid in the right appreciation of his character, and the perpetuation of his fame.

I shall hold myself in readiness to discharge the duty which you have assigned to me, on the evening of Saturday, December 4.

I am very respectfully and truly yours,

GEORGE TICKNOR CURTIS.

ADDRESS.

MONUMENTAL commemoration of the distinguished dead has been in all the ages of civilization the durable sign by which a contemporary generation has sought to transmit its estimate of high character to the recognition of posterity. The marble and the bronze, whether shaft or statue, tablet or inscription, preceded printed records of noble lives; and even now they answer a purpose which biographies or histories cannot answer. They speak as books cannot speak, for they speak to multitudes whom books do not reach, even in an age of reading and among a nation of readers.

There have been three epochs in this our America, when there have arisen many eminent men whose memories we have perpetuated by structures designed to stand as lasting visible tokens of our admiration and of our gratitude for lives of transcendent importance. One of these epochs was that of our Revolution, which produced more illustrious statesmen than great soldiers. The next age was marked by few extraordinary achievements in war,

but it brought forth statesmen of unimperishable renown, jurists of the highest rank, and inventors whose productions have carried forward the material condition of the world by enormous strides. The third period is that of our civil war, which developed few very eminent statesmen, but it gave rise to a larger number of great soldiers than any other period in modern times, save that which comprehended the European wars that followed and were caused by the French Revolution.

Perhaps the reason, or one reason, why our civil war was more prolific in the highest form of the military than the civil character, was because, from the long pending discussion of the public question that was finally put to the arbitrament of arms, there was but little to be discovered and made operative by the genius of the statesman. The principles that lay at the basis of the whole civil controversy had been explored, enunciated, and made into a definite issue by the intellects of the civilians who preceded the resort to arms between the two sections into which our Union unhappily became divided. As representative minds, teaching opposite doctrines concerning the nature of our Constitution, Webster and Calhoun stand, and will always stand, as the two statesmen who gave form and substance to the opposite sides of the national debate. They

left little of argument or reasoning to be added by those who were to come after them ; and when at length it became necessary for the Federal Government to defend and assert its proper authority by physical force, and the revolting states and their people believed it to be necessary to the protection of their rights and interests to establish an independent confederacy, the chief field for statesmanship was a field of administration in assertion of the political doctrines which the two sections had respectively embraced. But in the military contest there was a different field — a field for the development of whatever genius for war the people of either section possessed. The contest became one of stupendous proportions before the civil rulers or the people on either side were aware of what it was to be. In any such war there must arise generals of the highest grade ; for it is only men of great military capacity who can lead and handle armies of such magnitude as those which encountered each other in this war — a war waged over a country of vast extent, and waged between forces animated by an equal determination to win final victory.

He of whom I am to speak to you to-night was at one time in this terrible contest the central military figure on the Union side. I shall not say of him that he was the greatest general of the whole

war. It is enough for the glory of McClellan, enough for the place that he is to occupy in history, enough for the instruction of posterity, to describe truly what he was, how he came to be what he was, and what we owe to him; to relate the obstacles which he had to encounter in the conduct of the government that he served; what were the qualities that enabled him to do what he did in spite of the enmity of open enemies and the treachery of pretended friends. Other men, if placed in the same situation, might have done more or might have done less. No other general *was* placed in the same situation. We are concerned here with what McClellan did, and not with what some other general might have done; with his abilities, his motives, his principles, and his conduct; with all that made up his individuality, and made him, in the sum total of his character, a most definite, unique, and memorable person.

In the course of nature he should have dropped a tear over my grave, if haply there might be anything in me to call for such a tribute from him. I was by many years his senior in age; but I knew and loved him, and have survived him; knew him in the intimacy of close friendship; loved him as I have never loved any other man who was not of my own blood. I have obeyed your summons to speak

of him because I felt qualified for the duty, and because those who had a right to be consulted have approved your choice and lent me their aid.

It is now a little more than a year since his mortal remains were laid in a grave that overlooks the Delaware at the capital of his adopted State. The thousands who there in mute reverence witnessed the grand simplicity of his burial — so appropriate to his unostentatious life — knew that their generation had never been called to mourn a public man of greater virtues and greater worth than his. They knew that in his whole life there had never been an act or an utterance that should give a pang to those who loved him; that there was nothing to be explained, extenuated, or accounted for by casuistry, sound or unsound; that he was noble, unselfish, devoted to duty, rich in all the graces of the Christian character, to a degree beyond the ordinary measure of human goodness. They knew that there was a winning charm in his personal presence rarely to be met, and felt alike by all — a charm that was unstudied, the natural expression of a frank, true, and guileless nature.

In the course of a long life and of much intercourse with men of mark, I have never known anything like the influence of McClellan's aspect and demeanor. It has been said of him, by one who

knew him as I did, that his presence was a benediction. It was so from his youth. In his mature years, and after fame had become associated in our minds with his image, he was ever the same simple, well poised, unaffected person, around whom there was an atmosphere of truth, intelligence, and goodness, that one drank with ever increasing satisfaction. It was an atmosphere for which I know of no better epithet than *wholesome*, for it was unalloyed by the least taint of anything that was morally unhealthy. To breathe it was like breathing the air of an elevated region, where the sweetness of flowers mingles with the purest ingredients of the element that sustains our lives. That such a moral atmosphere should have surrounded a soldier, and a man who lived habitually in contact with the world, if no miracle, is at least worthy of distinct recognition. So happily compounded was his character, so completely did the outer man express the inner attributes of a kindly, sincere, and attractive soul, that the influence of his personal presence was the same upon those whom the world would call his social equals and those who could have known him only as one who stood above them, but was yet very near and dear to them. Those who stood upon the same social plane, as we sometimes account such distinctions, could enjoy the

unbought grace of such a character, and could analyze it if they were disposed. Others felt it without analysis, but with just as sure a perception of a rare and beautiful nature. I must give you a few anecdotes that will illustrate this peculiarity of the man :

One summer's afternoon, a couple of years before his death, I sat conversing with him on the veranda of a hotel at a fashionable watering-place. There were none of the other guests very near to us. I heard a step behind us, as of a person approaching slowly and doubtful of farther advance. I turned and saw a tall man in rustic garb looking most intently at the General. Supposing that he was some countryman who wanted an introduction, I rose and stepped towards him. "Sir," he whispered, "I have come a long way from my home to see General McClellan — I fought under him at Antietam — do you think he would speak with me?" I need not tell you what greeting this soldier received ; but his eyes filled with tears as the General told him that he remembered how his regiment obeyed, in the flame and crash of the battle, and amid whizzing bullets and bursting shells, an order that had been given to advance and drive back a portion of the enemy from a certain position. "And you were in that charge?" said the General. "God

bless you ! There was many a poor fellow fell in your ranks ; but they did not die in vain ; and you, comrade, have not lived in vain." There was much other discourse ; sweet, tender, filled with memories of a terrible but glorious day. This man had never seen the beloved commander since his final displacement from the head of the noble Army of the Potomac until that moment. Twenty years had rolled by in the peaceful, uneventful subsequent life of this soldier ; and now there beamed upon him once more that genial smile — once more, and as it proved, for the last time on earth he stood face to face with the General, whose tender care for the lives of his men they knew was the secret of that extraordinary power by which he could, when it became necessary, hurl them into the jaws of death. This power of McClellan over the soldiers whom he commanded, although a personal gift, was also a public property of the utmost value to the government and the country that he served ; and I must tell you how it was recklessly and needlessly lost to the public service by those who should have carefully husbanded and used it.

In the autumn of 1884, General McClellan was invited to be present, in the city of Rochester, at a public parade of the "Grand Army of the Republic" in that part of the State of New York. On the

announcement that he was coming, the resident population of the city was swelled, on the day of the procession, by forty thousand people from the surrounding counties. They came from the broad, rich plains of Geneseo, from the shores of Ontario, and from the regions where the upper waters of the Genesee River, one of the tributaries of your own Susquehanna, pour themselves down to the wheels of industry in a thriving and energetic community. Schools of learning, the teachers and pupils of a university, the instructed and cultivated of a refined and educated people of both sexes, mingled in the throng of artisans, farmers, merchants, laborers—the components of our best civilization. As the procession advanced along its line of march, an excited crowd insisted on uncoupling the horses from the carriage in which McClellan was seated, and on dragging it by their own stalwart arms. This he would not permit, although it was with difficulty prevented. Along the whole route the joy, the manifestations of delight, the eagerness to see him and to grasp his hand, were unprecedented. No other man in America could have called forth such an homage from such a people by his mere presence. He had no official position, and was not likely to have any. In all that vast crowd there was not a person on whom he could bestow any-

thing but a friendly smile, a kind word, and a pressure of the hand. This homage came from the hearts of men, to one who they all knew had never received from his country the meed that should have been paid to great services and unsurpassed personal worth. It was all that they could give — a spontaneous outburst of affection from a generous, just, and most intelligent people.

One other story and I pass on. In the spring of 1884, General McClellan had occasion to visit a remote part of Texas to explore some mineral lands. He and his party of engineers and laborers found themselves one day in a frontier town, at the end of railway travel in that direction. The inhabitants insisted on giving him a public reception in their town hall before they would allow him to continue his journey, the remainder of which was to be made on horseback. They crowded into the little building. Among them were men who had fought in the civil war on opposite sides. Union soldiers and Confederate soldiers, old and young, men of northern and men of southern birth, men of all shades of political feeling, pressed around him, paid their tribute to his character, and evinced their knowledge of his peculiar reputation. So it was everywhere, at all times, wherever he appeared in the broad domain of this Republic,

among people to whom he was in one sense a stranger.

I have heard it remarked by an intelligent man who served, and served well, in the rank and file of the Union armies, that the attention which we have bestowed upon the careers of our most distinguished generals, and our jealousy of their respective reputations, indicate some indifference to the claims of the common soldiers, who risked as much as and more than their commanders, but whose lives were the counters with which ambitious heroes played for the stake of personal glory. If this complaint is in any case just, I take it upon me to say, concerning McClellan, that one of the most prominent and important of the traits of his military character was his conscientious care for the men who composed the armies that he commanded. To him they were no counters in a game for his own distinction. They were the precious lives entrusted to him by Providence for the most important public purpose that a government and people ever undertook.

The tenderness of McClellan's nature was by no means unbraced by the robust qualities of which so much account is made in our estimates of military men. The sternness with which he could repress disorder and punish mutinous conduct was exhibited more than once in the most remarkable man-

ner. Of personal courage he often gave proof on the field of battle, when it was necessary and right for a commanding general to expose his own life ; nor do I know that his courage was ever questioned. But detraction has long been busy with the imputation that, although he was a very accomplished man in some parts of the art of war, yet, as a general in the field, he lacked vigor, decision, promptness, the quick, resolute action by which a blow well struck is followed at once into the gain of farther advantages. It was said that he was constitutionally "slow," that he was always calling for re-enforcements, was never ready to act until he had accumulated every possible resource, and that he thus suffered the opportune moment to go by. This was especially the criticism that, with some honesty in a few and with great dishonesty in others, was applied to him after the battle of Antietam. It will be my duty to show you that this is entirely false. A man who could take a demoralized army, as McClellan took the combined forces that had been defeated under Pope in front of Washington at the second Bull Run, restore its discipline by the magic of his name and his swift reconstruction of its shattered organizations, and then lead it to victory within fourteen days, after an almost unexampled celerity of movement against

the enemy who had crushed it two weeks before and had then gone sixty miles to the north-west with a purpose to descend upon the capital on the other side of the Potomac — such a man is not to be spoken of or thought of as wanting in the force and vigor of a great general.

But I am anticipating, and perhaps I am violating the rules of art in the construction of this discourse; yet I doubt if all the rules of rhetorical composition that were ever taught in the schools will help me to reach the feelings and convictions of this audience better than the free flow of my thoughts as they well up from their fountains and spread themselves over my page. I am saddened by the memory that this dear friend is no more. Where are you? I cry out to him in my loneliness — Where in the universe is now your gracious spirit? Faith answers that he is in the great company of those who did manfully the work assigned to them on earth. My heart was just now in that grave at Trenton. I recall it that I may give you in brief a narrative of his life, may show you how you should appreciate his character, and why you should perpetuate his fame. In what remains of this address there shall be method, and the due order that you have a right to expect.

In describing McClellan's campaigns, his organ-

ization of the Army of the Potomac, his plans for the entire conduct of the war, and his services in twice saving the Capital, I shall state results and conclusions only, to which the historical materials now enable us to arrive; and I shall refer you, for the proof of my positions, chiefly to the work that has just been published under the title of "McClellan's Own Story," which was written by him during the last years of his life, and was left by him for such use as his literary executor might see fit to make of it. You will notice that this record is illustrated by the editor with many extracts from General McClellan's letters to his wife, to whom, whatever might have been the duty of the day, marching or fighting, or office work, he wrote every night of his life when he was away from her, before he closed or attempted to close his eyes. No more remarkable collection of letters has ever been given to the world. They reveal the man's inner soul, so that you can know his motives, his feelings, his purposes, the springs of his conduct, his relations with other men, how they affected him and affected the country, as well as if you stood constantly by his side and could look directly into his mind and heart. One part of the duty which has been assigned to me on this occasion is to speak of McClellan's character. You

can learn it for yourselves without any aid from me, by following him from day to day, and from night to night, through the outpouring of his inmost thoughts to the person with whom he stood in the most intimate relation of life; the young wife to whom he had been but recently married, whom, with her lately born infant, he had been obliged to leave at the call of his country, and who, herself the daughter of a soldier, was a woman worthy in heart and intellect of such a husband. She is now, in her widowhood, an object of interest and veneration to such multitudes of people that I could not avoid pointing you to the sources from which you may learn how he unbosomed himself to her who could best understand him.

I may remark, in reference to the materials to which I have referred, that I, like many others who are here present, belong to the generation of those who lived through the whole of our civil troubles and the war which ensued from them; and that I was a close observer, from day to day, of all that was taking place and that could become known to a private citizen. But I am now speaking to many who were children at the time of these events, or perhaps were then unborn. They will understand that, while my memory

runs concurrently with the events themselves, I shall make no assertions that are not substantiated by the truth of history.

I must give you, in the briefest possible space, a *résumé* of the condition of the country just preceding the commencement of actual hostilities. I dislike to use the terms North and South — they ought, by this time, to be laid aside; but there are no others that will conveniently stand for the States which adhered to the Federal Government and the States which undertook to secede from the Union. In 1860 the Free States, collectively styled the North, elected a President of the United States on an issue relating to slavery in the Territories. It does not belong to this occasion to speak of the wisdom or the want of wisdom in tendering to the South, or in accepting from the South, an issue on any question relating to slavery; nor is it now needful to trace the causes which led to the adoption, in the North and the South, respectively, of political “platforms” entirely irreconcilable. The election of a President by the votes of the Free States alone, on a platform to which the people of the South could not assent, was made by the Southern States their reason for endeavoring to leave the Union.

Immediately after the election of President

Lincoln, South Carolina, in December, 1860, passed her ordinance of secession from the Union. This was followed by the same proceeding in the five States of Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, and Florida; so that before the 4th of February, 1861, six of the Southern States had adopted ordinances of secession; and on the 8th of February deputies from these States had adopted and published at Montgomery, in Alabama, a provisional constitution for the so-called Confederate States.

McClellan, who was at the age of thirty-five in the autumn of 1860, had been for about four years in civil life: first as chief engineer, afterward as Vice-President of the Illinois Central Railroad, and later as President of the Eastern Division of the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad. His last commission in the army was that of a captain of cavalry, which he resigned in January, 1857. His residence was in Cincinnati. So thoroughly convinced was he, in the autumn of 1860, that war would ensue between the North and the South, that, in a lease which he then took of a house in that city, he required the insertion of a clause releasing him from the obligation in the event of war. He chose to put himself in a position in which he could render to his country the services

for which he was qualified. There are two ways of looking at his conduct: One is to apply to it the superficial suggestion that it was dictated by ambition; the other is to recognize the fact that the man of whom I am speaking was no common person, and to look for those elements of character which in him rose far above the ordinary level. Mercenary motives are not to be imputed to a man who surrendered a salary of \$10,000 per annum and took the precarious chances of military employment; and as to motives of ambition, we must look through all the facts before we draw such an inference.

The first thing to be noticed in our analysis of McClellan's character is his political opinions. I use the term political not in a party sense at all, but in its broadest acceptance, and perhaps I should say that I speak of his constitutional opinions. I have elsewhere said that "I have not known any man who was not specially trained in the philosophy of politics, whose views of public and constitutional questions were so sound and wise as his." Of course I meant to compare him with that order of men who have made political science the study of their lives, and not to intimate that McClellan, without study and research, had intuitively arrived at sound constitutional

opinions. I meant to say that McClellan, although educated as a military man, was a better instructed constitutionalist than any other man whom I have known who was not a statesman or publicist by special training or employment. I was very much impressed by this when I first met him in the autumn of 1862, after his forced retirement from the command of the Army of the Potomac. I had not seen him since the year 1842, when he graduated from West Point. When I renewed my acquaintance with him after a lapse of twenty years, I found him to be singularly alive to all the dangers that then threatened the Constitution of the United States. You, who cannot personally recall the currents of opinion and feeling at that time, can have little conception of the perils through which the Constitution passed. The successful assertion of the right of State secession from the Union was by no means the sole danger. Multitudes of men throughout the North, many of them in high public positions, were speaking of the Constitution as if it had been suspended from its office; and whether it was ever to be restored to its functions they considered doubtful. Carelessly and heedlessly tempting the future, they treated the Constitution as something that had been put aside to await the advent of some new

authority, which was to grasp and wield unknown powers through a military conquest of the Southern States and a suppression of their autonomy. This dangerous drift of public sentiment McClellan thoroughly comprehended and feared. He spoke of it with me repeatedly, as the greatest peril of the time, in words so solemn, earnest, and true, that from that time forward I felt how fortunate it was that this man, of such great military accomplishments, was a better instructed constitutional statesman than nine-tenths of the public men of the time in either political party.

But I specially wish now to adduce a remarkable proof that my estimate of this part of McClellan's character is correct. I find in the introductory chapter of his lately published Memoirs the following short paragraphs:

. . . "In a country so vast as ours, with such great differences of topography and of climate, with a population so numerous and derived from such a variety of sources, and, in consequence of all this, such diversities of habits, local laws, and material interests, it is impossible for a centralized government to legislate satisfactorily for all the domestic concerns of the various parts of the Union.

"The only safe policy is that the general Government be strictly confined to the general powers and duties vested in it by the old Constitution, while the individual States pre-

serve all the sovereign rights and powers retained by them when the constitutional compact was formed.

“As a corollary from this, I am convinced that no State can be deprived of any of these retained rights, powers, and duties without its own consent, and that the power of amending the Constitution was intended to apply only to amendments affecting the manner of carrying into effect the original provisions of the Constitution, but not to enable the general Government to seize new power at the expense of any unwilling State.

“A strict adherence in practice to this theory presents, in my opinion, the only possibility of the permanent maintenance of our Union throughout the long years of the future.”

I have been for more than forty years, as you perhaps know, a student of the Constitution, its history, the lives, purposes, and teachings of its framers, and the whole course of its administration, and I do not hesitate to say that in my judgment McClellan's understanding of the scope and purpose of the amending power was entirely correct. It is a doctrine of which few persons have ever thought, but a volume could be written in its defence. McClellan stated it with a clearness of apprehension and a lucid exactness of language, tersely and precisely, just as it should be expressed. He was entirely right in saying that the permanent maintenance of our Union throughout the long years of the future depends

upon this doctrine. Whenever it is departed from our constitutional system will be overthrown, and after that will come the deluge.

Next you will observe McClellan's military qualifications for the great place to which he was called. They comprehended a greater variety of experience, observation, and acquired knowledge than was possessed at that moment by any other man in America on the Union side; and added to these was the very important qualification of great personal strength and physical power of endurance. His labors of all kinds, so long as he served during the Civil War, were immense; and he often tired out the strongest and hardiest of his staff. Beginning with his West Point education, and his service in the Mexican war, we find that in these respects he stood upon a par with many other officers of the regular army; but we have to fill out a most comprehensive outline of subsequent experience and acquisition, for his opportunities of accomplishing himself in every branch of the profession of arms were certainly not surpassed, if they were equalled, by those enjoyed by any other officer in this country. At the close of the Mexican war he commanded the engineer company and brought it to West Point, where he continued to serve with it, and, until 1851, he also

gave instruction in practical engineering. In the latter year, he superintended the construction of Fort Delaware. In 1852 he served with Capt. R. B. Marcy on the Red River exploration. In 1853 and 1854 he was sent to Washington Territory and Oregon, as an engineer officer, to explore a route for the Pacific Railroad.

In the spring of 1855, Mr. Jefferson Davis, who was then Secretary of War, sent a commission of officers to Europe, composed of Major R. Delafield, Major A. Mordecai, and Captain McClellan, to obtain and report information on military service in general, and the recent improvements in the various military systems. The scope of this commission comprehended the whole of the modern art of war in all its details. The Crimean war was then in progress, and the allied British and French forces were besieging Sebastopol. The French and the Russian authorities extended no special courtesies to our commissioners, but they received every attention from the English commander, General Simpson, the successor of Lord Raglan. They spent the summer in the Crimea, studying the operations of war on the grand scale on which they were there conducted. In November they left the Crimea, and were occupied for some months in visiting the most important mili-

tary posts and fortresses in Europe. McClellan's part in this comprehensive survey of military affairs was embodied in a special report, which was first published by the Government in a rather inconvenient quarto form, and it remained for some time but little known, excepting to military men. But in October, 1861, after he had been called to Washington, an edition of it was brought out by the house of Lippincott & Co., in this city, under the title of "The Armies of Europe." The public were thus enabled to learn McClellan's extensive and minute knowledge of the art of war in all its multifarious details; and there is no art or science known and practised among men the full mastery of which includes so much. In the legal profession, long experience and training enable men, by special study of any subject, to deal with it for the purposes of the administration of justice in particular cases. But in the military profession there can be no special study for special occasions; no sudden investigation to learn what to do on the eve of this battle or in that movement. A great general must be an accomplished engineer, an organizer, an artillery, a cavalry, and an infantry officer; he must know many sciences and many arts; he must be acquainted with the topography of the country in which he is to act;

he must know men, and must be able to govern them; he must have all his knowledge at command and at all times; and, although he must use subalterns of various ranks as his agents, he must be able to choose and to direct them. When McClellan surrendered his civil employment as President of the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad, and drew his sword for the Union, he was by far the most accomplished military man in the whole North. He had travelled much—a great deal throughout the Union—and his experience as a railway manager had also given him a great amount of topographical and geographical knowledge.

I must pass rapidly over his Western campaign, before he was called to Washington, because I must make this whole narrative of his previous career converge to the point of his arrival in the capital of the Union, as the point at which we are to take him up, on the great national theatre of the war. It is enough to say here that, at the special instance of the Governor of Ohio, Governor Dennison, the Legislature of that State, on the 23d of April, 1861, passed a bill which enabled the Governor to appoint McClellan to the command of all the militia and volunteers of Ohio that were to be called out in defence of the Union.

McClellan accepted the appointment on the same day. This was just nine days after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, in the harbor of Charleston, by the Confederate forces, had compelled Major Anderson to surrender that fort. The attack on the national flag roused the whole North to a sense that there was to be war. In Cincinnati, and all along the Ohio river, intense excitement prevailed; the formation of regiments began immediately. But the authorities in Washington left almost everything in the West to the loyal State governments and people in that region. Ohio was peculiarly situated. South of her, separated only by the Ohio river, lay Kentucky, and the attitude of that State was very doubtful. Missouri was likely to be the scene of a serious struggle. Secession forces were gathering in Tennessee and upon the Mississippi River, and also in Western Virginia, which was not then a separate State by itself. In Illinois, Indiana, and to some extent in Ohio, numbers of the inhabitants were, or were believed to be, in sympathy with the Southern cause. It was very plain to McClellan that all this must be promptly checked. But the general Government were wholly unprepared for war in the West or in the East. Beauregard was rapidly advancing through North Carolina into Virginia, and the

Confederate government were preparing to make Richmond their capital. "The Western States," McClellan says in his memoirs, "were almost entirely without the means of defence, but the Governors (cordially supported by the legislatures) at once took steps to obtain by purchase and by contract, at home and abroad, the requisite arms, ammunition, clothing, camp equipage, etc. The supplies thus provided were often inferior in quality and insufficient in quantity, but they answered the purpose until better arrangements could be made."

The general Government had called for 75,000 volunteers to be mustered into its service for three months. Ohio's quota of these new levies, the three-months' men, together with twelve or thirteen regiments of the Ohio State troops, constituted the forces of which McClellan took the command; and he immediately proceeded to the work of organization and discipline. Almost all that was done by the Administration at Washington was that on the 13th of May, 1861, an order was issued constituting the Department of Ohio, namely, the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and assigning McClellan to the command as major-general. Afterward, a small part of Western Pennsylvania and that part of Western Virginia

north of the Great Kanawha and west of the Greenbriar rivers was added to his Department. He was left without a single instructed staff officer, and was obliged to supply that deficiency as well as he could. For a long time General Scott, the general-in-chief, and the other military authorities in Washington, would not allow him to organize cavalry and artillery for his command, because they considered it unnecessary. No battery in the United States service was at his disposal excepting one that was authorized by General Wool when communication with Washington was cut off. Upon McClellan's recommendation the Governors of the States organized State batteries on their own responsibility.

It is worth while to fix our attention for a moment on this state of affairs, because it illustrates most forcibly how totally unprepared for war the Federal Government was; and it also illustrates the wisdom of McClellan's remark that, in the complete capacity of the States, by reason of their political sovereignties, to act on their own responsibility in aid of the Federal power during a great emergency, lies one of the chief values of our political system. It was by the exercise of these powers that the Western States enabled McClellan to achieve the first successes of the war.

Those successes were achieved in one month, between the 21st of June and the 21st of July. Let any one who has heard the slur of "slowness" hurled at McClellan fix his attention upon the fact that, left entirely to himself, save in the support which he received from the Western governments, in one month he cleared the secessionists out of Western Virginia, made all the military dispositions necessary to hold Kentucky and Tennessee, and to organize and occupy the mountain region so as to enable Union forces to move down the valley of the Mississippi by roads parallel with that stream; a line of operations which he considered far preferable to any movement down the river itself. With comparatively little loss of his own men, he took nine guns, twelve colors, a great number of prisoners, fought many engagements, and conquered in every one. It is true that he fought with raw troops against raw troops; but the Confederate forces were officered by able men, and the soldiers were fairly disciplined and full of courage. The Union forces were as well disciplined as such troops could be in so short a time, but they were not always so well officered as the Confederates. The time of the three months' men was about expiring, and, when he had to give up the command in the West, McClellan was pain-

fully occupied and embarrassed in finding out how to supply their places. At this moment, the public attention throughout the North was fixed upon him as the first commander who had achieved anything of importance.

On the 21st of July, the Union forces under McDowell were utterly routed by the Confederates at Bull Run, some thirty miles from Washington. On the morning of that day, members of Congress and others had driven out from Washington in carriages to see what was supposed to be a mob of rebels thrashed by the Union troops. The "mob" was commanded in person by General Beauregard, an officer in every way superior to McDowell. Mr. Davis, the president of the Confederate government, was in the vicinity, attended by some of his ablest assistants. The civilians who had driven out from Washington to see a Union victory over a "mob" drove back in the afternoon amid the mêlée of forces retreating in the utmost confusion. Some of the Union soldiers in their flight threw away their arms, and did not stop until they reached their own States in the East. Washington was in imminent peril. Something must be done. On the 22d of July McClellan received a despatch from the Adjutant-General stating that the condition of public affairs rendered necessary

his immediate presence in Washington, and directing him to turn over his Western command to the next in rank, who happened to be General Rosecrans.

I have hitherto left untouched one very interesting part of McClellan's character, because I did not wish to speak of it until I brought him upon the central theatre of national affairs. I refer to his religious convictions. Very many men believe in a personal God, Creator and Governor of the universe. In McClellan this belief was ever present to his consciousness; ever the controlling influence that governed his actions and his thoughts to a greater degree than in the case of any other man actively concerned in human affairs whom I have ever known or of whom I have read. He was called to a great duty in a crisis of his country, and from first to last, every day and every hour, he was under the influence of a belief that Divine Providence was shaping every event and overruling every occurrence for the purposes of infinite wisdom. Yet in all this there was not the least tinge of what is sometimes called fanaticism. It was a sober, regulated, deep conviction that the affairs of this world are under the government of God. It was this conviction that enabled him to bear obloquy, and to do his

duty in spite of the injustice of which he was made the victim, while, at the same time, he never omitted, in his reliance on Heaven, to use all human means to insure success. Writing to his wife from Washington, after he had received unbounded flattery, and had had suggested to him a vast temptation to which he might have easily yielded, with what fidelity to principle, with what religious humility, with what noble disdain of all the promptings of ambition, he speaks to her who shared his inmost soul, and who understood him as no one else could :

I receive letter after letter, have conversation after conversation, calling on me to save the nation, alluding to the presidency, dictatorship, etc. As I hope one day to be united with you forever in Heaven, I have no such aspiration. I would cheerfully take the dictatorship and agree to lay down my life when the country is saved. I am not spoiled by my unexpected new position. I feel sure that God will give me the strength and wisdom to preserve this great nation ; but I tell you, who share all my thoughts, that I have no selfish feeling in this matter. I feel that God has placed a great work in my hands. I have not sought it. I know how weak I am, but I know that I mean to do right, and I believe that God will help me and give me the wisdom I do not possess. Pray for me, that I may be able to accomplish my task, the greatest perhaps that any poor weak mortal ever had to do. . . . God grant that I may bring this war to an end and be permitted to spend the rest of my days quietly with you. *

* Written on the 9th of August, 1861.

I must now speak of a trait in McClellan's character which, as Mr. Prime has suggested, some persons may regard as a defect. It was certainly one that placed him at a disadvantage against the politicians who swarmed at the seat of government. He was so perfectly honest himself that he rarely suspected, could but seldom be made to suspect, dishonesty in others. He had seen almost nothing of the interior world of politics; and when he came to Washington into a very high and responsible position he did not dream of the existence of men whose patriotism was a pretence, and whose whole management of public affairs was for personal or party ends. Such men abounded, and they were potent because of their numbers and their activity. At no other period in our history has there been a class of public men of this description sufficiently strong to do great public mischief. They were not confined to one party; they were to be found in both parties. To name them all would be difficult; to name some of them would be easy, and it would be found that they were prominent; that they bore names which at one time were more or less high in public estimation, but they are now lost in the obscurity and contempt that inevitably await the order to which they belonged. They cannot be

resuscitated; they cannot be recalled without the derision that should follow such persons. It is only needful for me to say that after McClellan had been for some time in Washington, he learned, what he had not before suspected, that there were men in public life who were to constitute an enemy in his rear, quite as formidable to him and to his army as the other enemy in their front. The people saw the enemy in the front; the enemy in the rear they did not see.

I am now to express my convictions respecting the relations between General McClellan and President Lincoln. McClellan had known Mr Lincoln as a lawyer in Illinois, and also as a public man. He was well acquainted with Mr. Lincoln's habit of illustrating everything by some amusing story, of which he had an inexhaustible fund, and, as McClellan says and every one knows, Mr. Lincoln's stories were not always delicate, although they were apposite and droll. McClellan's estimate of Mr. Lincoln's powers as a statesman was not very high, before he encountered him as President of the United States. Mr. Lincoln's estimate of McClellan, prior to their meeting in Washington, could only have been formed from their slight acquaintance in the West before the war. The sudden peril into which Washington was brought

by the rout of the Federal forces at Bull Run was the immediate cause for summoning McClellan. As soon as Mr. Lincoln was brought into official and personal contact with him, his natural sagacity enabled him to see what McClellan was. Still, it requires a close analysis of Mr. Lincoln's situation and his peculiarities, to describe truly how it was that, while in reality he gave his full confidence to McClellan, he often acted, or seemed to act, as if he reposed only a sort of half confidence in him, and finally allowed him to be sacrificed. This is not to be explained by any suggestion of insincerity, nor was it from any want of good-will, nor was it a matter for which Mr. Lincoln is to be severely blamed. The true explanation is that, while Mr. Lincoln was shrewd enough and strong enough to defeat the machinations of men in his own party who were inimical to himself, and to compel his own renomination to the Presidency, he was not strong enough to prevent the same men from destroying the General whom he had selected, whom he trusted, and would gladly have sustained. Lincoln and McClellan ought to have ended the war in the summer of 1862, and but for the politicians they would have done so. Of the truth of this there cannot be a shadow of doubt in the mind of any intelligent person who calmly surveys all the facts.

There was another trait of McClellan's character which was not only no defect, but it was one of the qualities most needed in the position to which he was summoned. His enemies and detractors have from that day to this harped upon his "slowness." They little knew then, and those of them who survive do not know now, how important to the public interests was that quality which he possessed in a most eminent degree, and which, by a homely but accurate phrase, Mr. Prime has described as his "staying" power. He could not always baffle the intrigues or defeat the cabals or unravel the plots of his enemies behind the throne. But neither could they drive him one inch from what he knew to be right, shake for one moment his purpose to pursue plans which he knew to be necessary to the safety of the country, or make him sacrifice his military judgment to the judgments of mere civilians, or to the schemes of politicians. As I go on with the narrative, you will see how this "staying" power of McClellan — this calm, settled, determined purpose not to be driven — was the very cause whereby the military affairs of the Government were put into a condition to make it possible for the Government in the end to succeed in the war. If the General, supposing that some one else had been put into the

place to which McClellan was called, whoever he might have been, had not possessed this great quality, if he could have been forced by public clamor, popular impatience, official or any other interference, to hazard a movement when he knew that the proper preparations had not been made, the Southern States would in all probability have gained their independence in the autumn of 1861, before the forests on the banks of the Potomac had shed their leaves. It is sheer folly and driveling for men who pretend to write history at the present day to be rehearsing over and over the old charges against McClellan, when it is apparent that we should not now have the country that we possess if he could have been forced to move one moment sooner than he did, or to forego the complete preparation that he made, or to omit anything for which he provided. There is a truth about these things; he who runs can read it now, if he opens his eyes to the facts.

We have had scores and scores of writers — perhaps we shall have many more — who have labored to show the extensive preparation made in the South for war upon the Federal Government. It is represented that not only was there, from an early period, a conspiracy to effect the disruption of the Union, but that the military preparations for

the accomplishment of this result were very formidable. If the facts are as they are represented, they constitute a most damaging indictment of those who could have put, but did not put, the Government into some condition to meet the crisis whenever it might come. They also furnish the strongest possible confirmation of the wisdom of McClellan's determination to leave nothing undone that the crisis demanded, when it had come, and to take all the time that was needed to do that which should have been done, or should at least have been begun, before he was called to Washington. Now, what are the undeniable facts?

The election of President Lincoln in November, 1860, left an interval of almost four months between that event and his inauguration, which occurred on the 4th of March, 1861. In this interval, and before the eighth day of February, six of the cotton States, comprehending four millions of inhabitants, whites and blacks, had seceded from the Union, and the Confederate provisional government had been formed. The colored race were universally quiet, just as submissive as ever to their masters, perfectly willing to work in the absence of their owners, and as loyal as ever to the families to whom they belonged. The cotton crop of that region, averaging four million bales, would furnish

a safe basis for financial operations, almost as good as mines of gold. There was nothing to obstruct its production, or to prevent its reaching the markets of the world, or to intercept the return of its proceeds in any commodities or supplies that the States or their inhabitants might need. Although before the secession of those States there was a Union party more or less strong in all of them, after secession the people were practically unanimous in their determination to make good their independence. The slave-holding class formed a kind of aristocracy peculiarly well fitted to become efficient military officers. Two hundred and eighty-three men, educated at West Point, including those who in 1861 were in civil life, and those who were in the army of the United States but resigned, took service in the Confederate army. They were about one-fourth of all the West Point graduates then living. Some of them were men of the highest ability and accomplishment. The rank and file of the Confederate troops were sure to be composed of men capable in time of becoming excellent soldiers, with the comparatively few exceptions of the degraded class known in that region as "the poor whites," or, as the negroes styled them, "the white trash." All this condition of affairs in the remote South was known to McClellan, who had been long acquainted

with the state of Southern society, and had kept his eye steadily fixed on what was taking place. All this, too, was known, or should have been known, to those who, by the result of the Presidential election, had become responsible for the initiation and adoption of measures necessary to meet the emergency. Before the 4th of March, 1861, most of the Southern members of Congress had retired from both houses, leaving the dominant majority in both composed of those who were the political friends and supporters of the incoming administration. In vain did the Executive Government, in that short period before the formal change of administration was to take place, urge and implore that Congress to take the necessary steps to put the Government into a condition to meet the crisis. Nothing whatever was done. When President Lincoln was inaugurated, he had been armed with not an iota of power greater than that held by his predecessor, and his predecessor had, but without success, done his utmost to have measures adopted which would have strengthened Mr. Lincoln's hands, and enabled him to cope with the rising and advancing tide of secession so as, at least, to hold back the border States from being swept along with it. Formidable as the cotton States were, the problem of encountering a Southern Confederacy, of which North

Carolina and Virginia were also to be members, together with Arkansas and Texas, would be, as it proved, one far more formidable.

From the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln to the fall of Fort Sumter was a period of seven weeks. From the fall of Fort Sumter to the defeat of the Federal troops at the first Bull Run was a period of just three months. In this interval Mr. Lincoln's proclamation calling for 75,000 volunteers to be enlisted for three months was issued, and it was followed by what has been called "the great uprising of the North." In that uprising there was a magnificent display of genuine patriotism; but the people of the North did not comprehend the gravity of the situation, or foresee a great war, or feel that the Southern confederacy was anything but a conspiracy, or the Southern forces anything but a mob that could easily be dispersed. This feeling was shared by the administration. It received a terrible shock at Bull Run. There was a sudden call for McClellan. He came; and he arrived in Washington late in the afternoon of Friday the 26th of July. We have it on the authority of no less a person than Mr. Edwin M. Stanton that the administration and the army, such army as there was, were utterly demoralized by the event at Bull Run, and that Washington was in imminent peril. Writing on

the 26th of July to ex-President Buchanan, of whose cabinet he had been a member for a few months, Mr. Stanton uttered both history and prophecy. You will note that at the date of this letter Mr. Stanton had never seen General McClellan, and that the letter was written six months before Mr. Stanton became President Lincoln's Secretary of War :—

“The dreadful disaster of Sunday can scarcely be mentioned. The imbecility of this administration culminated in that catastrophe; an irretrievable misfortune and national disgrace never to be forgotten are to be added to the ruin of all peaceful pursuits and national bankruptcy, as the result of Lincoln's running the machine for five months.

“You perceive that Bennett is for a change of the Cabinet, and proposes, for one of the new Cabinet, Mr. Holt, whose opposition to Mr. Bennett's appointment was bitter and intensely hostile. It is not unlikely that some change in the War and Navy Departments may take place, but none beyond these two Departments until Jeff Davis turns out the whole concern. The capture of Washington seems now to be inevitable: during the whole of Monday and Tuesday it might have been taken without any resistance. The rout, overthrow, and utter demoralization of the whole army is complete. Even now I doubt whether any serious opposition to the entrance of the Confederate forces could be offered. While Lincoln, Scott, and the Cabinet are disputing who is to blame, the city is unguarded, and the enemy at hand. Gen. McClellan reached here last evening. But if he had the ability of Cæsar, Alexander, or Napoleon,

what can he accomplish? Will not Scott's jealousy, Cabinet intrigues, and Republican interference thwart him at every step? While hoping for the best, I cannot shut my eyes against the dangers that beset the Government, and especially this city. It is certain that Davis was in the field on Sunday, and the secessionists here assert that he headed in person the last victorious charge. Gen. Dix is in Baltimore; after three weeks neglect and insult he was sent for. The warm debate between Douglass' friend Richardson and Kentucky Bennett has attracted some interest, but has been attended with no bellicose result. Since this note was commenced the morning paper has come in, and I see that McClellan did not arrive last night, as I was informed he had. Gen. Lee was after him, but will have to wait a while before they can meet."

Soon after McClellan arrived in Washington, Mr. Stanton was introduced to him, by an old friend of the General, as a lawyer who would be a safe adviser on legal matters. McClellan was going into the war in which he was to stake everything, the little fortune that he had saved, perhaps life itself. If he fell, he would leave a wife and an infant child. He wished to make a will, and he also wished to know some lawyer who could give him sound advice on matters personal to himself. Mr. Stanton's character has always been an enigma; probably it will always remain one. I never saw a rational explanation of much of his conduct, and I never was able to discover one for

myself that would be consistent with a belief in his sincerity and honor. You have seen what his relations were to Mr. Lincoln and his advisers in July, '61, and what were his feelings about them. He at once attached himself to McClellan with the most profuse professions of friendship and personal devotion, and made known to the relatives of the General his unbounded confidence that McClellan would be the savior of the country. Apparently he thought that he could recommend himself to McClellan by the bitterest and most contemptuous expressions concerning Mr. Lincoln and the whole Lincoln "concern," whom he prophesied that "Jeff Davis" would turn out of their places. This became so offensive to McClellan that he was obliged to remind Mr. Stanton, as he has more than once told me, that Mr. Lincoln was President of the United States and *his* Commander-in-Chief. For months Mr. Stanton kept up his professions of devotion to the General, flattering him, as Mr. Buchanan had said he flattered *him, ad nauseam*. When and how all this suddenly ceased you will soon learn, and you will look for an explanation of the change. If you note the dates, you cannot impute the change to any revolution in Mr. Stanton's opinion or belief concerning the General's fitness for the great post which he was filling.

On the day before that on which McClellan reached Washington, an executive order was issued constituting the Division of the Potomac, and assigning him to its command. It consisted of that part of North-east Virginia in which McDowell commanded, comprising the troops in front of Washington, on the Virginia bank of the river, and the Department of Washington, under Mansfield, which comprised all the troops in Washington and its vicinity on the Maryland side of the river. On the 27th of July McClellan assumed command of the Division.

This practice of making geographical and territorial divisions or departments for military purposes, although inherited from the past, was one that was sure to lead to bad results. One of its worst results in our civil war was that it created opportunities for commanders and their friends to strive to have their commands swelled by as many troops as they could respectively get from the administration; and as political considerations had a great deal to do with the assigning of some of the local commanders to departments, the President was often led to order what he should not have ordered, to gratify the departmental commanders, and especially those who had political influence.

For example, Mr. Lincoln, when McClellan was on the eve of advancing into Virginia in March, 1862, withdrew from his command Blenker's German Division, and assigned it to General Fremont, who had just been placed in command of what was called the Mountain Department. The President knew when he did this that McClellan counted upon that division as a necessary part of the forces that he was to take to the Peninsula; he had promised McClellan that the division should not be withheld from his command, and he knew that in every military aspect and for every military reason this step would be wrong. But he allowed it, under a political pressure, for a political purpose, as he afterward explained to McClellan in an apologetic note, saying: "If you could know the full pressure of the case, I am confident you would justify it, even beyond a mere acknowledgment that the Commander-in-Chief may order what he pleases." Well does McClellan say in his memoirs that the Commander-in-Chief has no right to do what he pleases; he can properly do only what he is convinced is right. The President had already assured McClellan that he knew it would be wrong to issue this order, and then he admitted that he had issued it under a political pressure for a political purpose, to swell Fremont's command. This

is only one of numerous instances in which Mr. Lincoln acted against his own judgment in matters purely military for reasons purely political.

In regard to the proper function of the Commander-in-Chief, under our Constitution, I have elsewhere said what seems to me to express the exact truth, and I will quote it : —

“Not to look beyond our own national annals, a lesson had been taught to our fathers in the case of the man who achieved our liberties in the War of the Revolution. There was a time when the Continental Congress learned from sad experience that if Washington were not left untrammelled by cabals, were not supported with all the resources that the country could furnish, and made free to act on his own judgment, the cause of our Independence would be lost. Our Constitution, for many excellent reasons, makes the President Commander-in-Chief of the armies and navies of the United States. He may therefore lawfully direct the movements of armies and of fleets; and when he directs, he must be, and always is, obeyed. But are we never to learn that war is an art which, of all others, requires not only special aptitude, but special training? While no Executive is ever to abdicate a single one of his constitutional functions, there are and must be junctures

in every great war, especially on this continent, in which a wise President will exercise no interference with military plans which he is not personally competent to form, and on which his judgment must necessarily be inferior to that of the general whom he has selected and trusted to conduct a campaign." *

If this had been a war against a foreign enemy who was in possession of great tracts of our country where the inhabitants were thoroughly submissive to the invaders and anxious to have them succeed, the folly of a government that should act as our administration acted towards McClellan would have been manifest to the loyal people at the time. But this was a civil and not a foreign war; and, therefore, in our analysis of the conduct of the administration towards McClellan, we must take into the account the situation and composition of the executive government.

Before McClellan arrived in Washington, there was not a single military man at the seat of Government whose advice was of much value in regard to great military movements or preparations. Lieutenant-General Scott, the General-in-Chief, was an old man, borne down by the infirmi-

* "McClellan's Last Service to the Republic": New York, D. Appleton & Co.

ties of age, and, although in his prime he had been a great captain, he had never in his life commanded such bodies of troops as were now to be organized and employed. Most of his military ideas were antiquated, and many of them were diametrically opposed to those which McClellan entertained. McDowell had been defeated at Bull Run, and, if he had not been, he was entirely unfitted to be of any real service to the Executive as a military counsellor in great military affairs. In addition to this, President Lincoln soon found that he had two wars on his hands. One was the public war against the Southern Confederacy; the other was a war in the interior of his own cabinet. He was both the head of the Government and the head of a political party. He was most earnestly bent on saving the Union. He honestly believed that the interests of the country required his reelection to the Presidency; but to accomplish this, and to bring the public war to a successful close, he considered it necessary to hold his party together, and to shape things so as to secure his renomination by his party. For the latter object he was singularly well fitted. He had great personal and political shrewdness, and an almost imperturbable temper. It is most interesting, and at the same time it borders on the grotesque, to

see how he baffled those of his own political household who were true to themselves and not to him. In following this out, we have to note that all this cabal and political manœuvring and personal treachery ended at last in separating the two men who should have been united to the end, and in separating McClellan from the service of the country.

The first duty that devolved on McClellan after his arrival in Washington was to establish order and discipline, and provide for the safety of the city and the government. There was no proper police, civil or military. Everything was in confusion. Soldiers wandered loosely about the streets, and the hotels were filled with drunken officers. The demoralization of the forces which had come in from the disastrous field of Bull Run was complete. The troops, such as they were, were not posted so as either to preserve order or to offer any resistance to the enemy if he should decide to make an inroad. To place the city and the whole territorial division under military government was the first thing to be done. In a little more than a week, by passing long days in the saddle and the nights in his office, inspecting, organizing, and posting the troops, and reducing them to something like discipline, McClellan was

able, on the 4th of August, to write to a member of his family: "I have Washington perfectly quiet now; you would not know that there was a regiment here. I have restored order very completely already." Yet, all the while, he was not supreme and unhampered, but was often thwarted by the Lieutenant-General. Nevertheless, he carried out his own ideas against all obstacles.

Simultaneously with this work he had to provide for the defences of the city. Any one who examines a good map of Washington and the surrounding country will see why it was necessary, and how necessary it was, that the city should be fortified immediately.

"Not only was it necessary," says McClellan, "to organize; discipline, and drill the troops, but the immense labor of constructing the fortifications required to secure the city in the absence of the army was also to be performed by the troops. Not only did this consume much time, and greatly retard the preparation of the army for the field, but it tied down the troops to the line of the defences, and rendered it impossible to take up a more advanced position until the works were finished.

"Before my arrival, no one had contemplated the complete fortification of the city. I at once conceived the idea, and carried it into effect; for I saw immediately that the safety of the capital would always be a great clog on the movements of the army, unless its security were amply guaranteed by strong intrenchments. I cannot speak in

too high terms of the cheerfulness, zeal, and activity with which these raw troops performed this arduous and disagreeable labor. They gave thus early an earnest of what might be expected from them under more trying circumstances.

“The system adopted was that of detached earthworks. The most important points were occupied by large bastioned forts closed at the gorge, with magazines, platforms, etc.; the scarps and counterscarps often reveted with timber, the parapets usually sodded. The intermediate points were occupied by lunettes, redoubts, batteries, etc., and in a few cases these were united by infantry parapets. The entire circumference of the city was thus protected. Towards Manassas the very important advanced points of Upton’s and Munson’s Hills were held by strong works, with some small batteries near by. This was the key to the approach in that direction.”

In this work of establishing order and discipline, and fortifying the city, there was enough, and more than enough, to occupy the brain, the knowledge, and the authority of a first-rate commander. But now you have to observe that this General was at the very same time occupied in beginning and carrying forward the organization of that indispensable engine, an army. When McClellan undertook this work the United States had only a very small regular army, fit only for a peace establishment. All the other forces consisted of the new levies of volunteers that had come in before, or that were

coming in after the affair at Bull Run. But these raw levies were in no proper sense an army. What was required was the creation of that vast machine "which can move with irresistible force over all obstructions until met by another machine of like construction and greater power, or which is handled with greater skill." * Such a machine the instructed soldiers of the South were then preparing. The Army of the Potomac, the best, the most complete, the first army that the United States ever had on so large a scale, was created by McClellan and made ready for a forward movement in the course of eight months from the time of his arrival in Washington.

The regular army then numbered only 12,984 men and officers, divided into two regiments of dragoons, two of cavalry, one of mounted rifles, four of artillery, and ten of infantry. Only a very small portion of these regulars, of all arms, were available to McClellan in organizing the Army of the Potomac. He has said that, "no one cognizant of the circumstances, and possessed of any knowledge of military affairs, can honestly believe that I bestowed unnecessary time and labor upon the organization and instruction of that army whose courage, discipline, and efficiency finally brought the war to a

* Prime, editor of "McClellan's Own Story."

close." For my part I think it is quite time the carping about his delays and unnecessary consumption of time should cease. It was never anything but a captious and foolish complaint from the beginning, and any man ought at this day to be ashamed to repeat it.

When he commenced the herculean task of creating an army, he was, as you have seen, only the commanding general of the Territorial Division of the Potomac. General Scott, his superior officer, differed from him constantly on points vital to his system of organization, and McClellan was compelled to, and did in the main, carry his points against the old General's opposition. But at length, on the 1st of November, General Scott, at his own request, was placed on the retired list, and with his advice, and the concurrence of the entire cabinet, the President designated McClellan to command all the armies of the United States, with the exception only of General Wool's command, which then embraced Fortress Monroe and the adjacent country. McClellan was ordered to confer with the President so far as might be necessary. This enlarged sphere of his duties made it necessary for him not only to complete the organization of the Army of the Potomac, but to assume the direction of the whole war throughout the Southern States,

subject to the President's approval of his plans. At the time when he came into this new position, the cabinet consisted of Mr. Seward, Secretary of State; Mr. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury; Mr. Cameron, Secretary of War; Mr. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy; Mr. Montgomery Blair, Postmaster-General, and Mr. Bates, Attorney-General. The elevation of McClellan to the chief command under the President was hailed by the whole North with the greatest satisfaction; no serious difficulty had occurred between him and any member of the cabinet; the President gave him his full confidence, and for a good while consulted him about everything; the people of the North were not impatient. But as soon as the public began to see that McClellan was a person of great importance and one whose success in the war would make him all-powerful, the politicians and the radical leaders in Washington began to bestir themselves. They had learned, soon after he came to Washington, that they could not make a party tool of him, and that he would not attach himself to the political fortunes of any of the aspirants for the next Presidency. He was busy in organizing an army, with the prescience and accomplishments of a great soldier, and he had no time or taste for political affairs. Congress had, a few days before he reached Washington, declared

that the sole object of the war was the preservation of the Union and the prevention of the secession of the Southern States. This was not only McClellan's personal opinion about the proper object of the war, but he was bound to consider himself officially instructed by the Resolution of Congress to so regard it. It was, too, Mr. Lincoln's personal opinion, and as President he was equally bound to carry out this view of the object of the war. But the radical leaders and politicians determined on two things; that the war should be made a war for the extermination of slavery, and that McClellan should not be permitted to succeed in bringing the war to a close. To accomplish these ends their first step was to sow the seeds of distrust of McClellan in Mr. Lincoln's mind. Their next step was to bring Mr. Stanton into the Cabinet as Secretary of War, in place of Mr. Cameron. For this purpose a secret intrigue was set on foot in the early part of January, 1862. Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward were adroitly made to believe that Mr. Cameron wished to retire, and would accept the mission to Russia; and also that General McClellan specially desired to have Mr. Stanton made Secretary of War. If the first was true, which is more than doubtful, the last was not true. But the intrigue was entirely successful. Mr. Stanton became Secretary of War.

Mr. Lincoln was mistaken in believing that Mr. Stanton was a man who would make a great administrative official and a wise war minister. Mr. Stanton's energy was spasmodic, due chiefly to an imperious temper; he had very little knowledge of constitutional law, and his judgment in military affairs was good for nothing. Pecuniarily, he was not a corrupt or corruptible man; but he permitted the worst of harpies to prey upon the Treasury, through the expenditures of the War Office, and he made the cost of the war in blood and treasure more than threefold what it needed to have been. In taking him into his Cabinet, Mr. Lincoln took a man who was secretly in league with the radical wing of his party, and who was already determined to destroy the General in whom the President trusted. Yet Mr. Lincoln did it in the honest belief that he was serving General McClellan, as well as the country and himself.

I have already said that if you note the dates, you cannot impute Mr. Stanton's change towards McClellan to any change in his opinion and belief concerning McClellan's fitness for the position in which he stood. It was simply rank treachery and dissimulation. Mr. Stanton became Secretary of War early in January, 1862, before the army was in a fit condition to make a forward move-

ment. At that time McClellan was laboriously engaged in completing the organization of the army, and in making his plans for the prosecution of the war. Mr. Stanton knew perfectly well that there was no ground for dissatisfaction with the General, and that the President felt none. Now hear what McClellan says in his memoirs, where he speaks of a former private effort of Mr. Stanton to make him, McClellan, arrest Mr. Cameron, the Secretary of War, for having made an abolition speech to a newly arrived regiment, which Mr. Stanton said was an incitement to insubordination. This crazy proposal was quite characteristic of Mr. Stanton, but of course it produced no impression on the General. This is what McClellan says :

“I had no idea who might be selected in Mr. Cameron’s place ; and, as he supported me in purely military matters, I objected to his removal and saved him. He was made aware of this at the time.

“Finally, one day when I returned to my house from my day’s work and was dressing for dinner, a lady of my family told me that Colonel Key, one of my aides, had just been there to inform me that Mr. Cameron had resigned and that Mr. Stanton was appointed in his place. This was the first intimation that I had of the matter. Before I had finished my toilet Mr. Stanton’s card came up, and as soon as possible I went down to see him. He told me that he had been

appointed Secretary of War, and that his name had been sent to the Senate for confirmation, and that he had called to confer with me as to his acceptance. He said that acceptance would involve very great personal sacrifices on his part, and that the only possible inducement would be that he might have it in his power to aid me in the work of putting down the rebellion; that he was willing to devote all his time, intellect, and energy to my assistance, and that together we could soon bring the war to an end. If I wished him to accept he would do so, but only on my account; that he had come to know my wishes and determine accordingly. I told him that I hoped he would accept the position.

“Soon after Mr. Stanton became Secretary of War it became clear that, without any reason known to me, our relations had completely changed. Instead of using his new position to assist me, he threw every obstacle in my way, and did all in his power to create difficulty and distrust between the President and myself. I soon found it impossible to gain access to him. Before he was in office, he constantly ran after me, and professed the most ardent friendship; as soon as he became Secretary of War, his whole manner changed, and I could no longer find the opportunity to transact even the ordinary current business of the office with him. It is now very clear to me that, far from being, as he had always represented himself to me, in direct and violent opposition to the radicals, he was really in secret alliance with them, and that he and they were alike unwilling that I should be successful. No other theory can possibly account for his and their course, and on that theory everything becomes clear and easily explained.”

I have not time to detail how McClellan, from the time of Mr. Stanton's entry into the Cabinet, was hampered and obstructed. Let one specimen suffice. He was sent for to a Cabinet meeting when other persons were present, and the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Chase, backed by Mr. Stanton, endeavored to force him to disclose his plan of operations against the enemy; McClellan met this by saying that if he were to disclose his plans at that meeting they would become known to the enemy in twenty-four hours, because Washington was full of spies; yet, if the President would order him to state his plans, he must obey. Mr. Lincoln shrank from assuming such a responsibility, and then Mr. Seward broke up the meeting, remarking contemptuously that they didn't seem likely to get much out of the General, turned on his heel as he buttoned up his coat, and left the room. There were just two men in that Cabinet who perfectly understood the folly and danger of extorting from the General-in-Chief a statement of his military purposes, with the enemy strongly intrenched within thirty miles of Washington, and with treacherous inmates in almost every household in the city. These gentlemen were Mr. Seward and Mr. Montgomery Blair.

I pass on to the time when McClellan was ready for a forward movement of the army into Virginia. This was in March, 1862. By that time the Southern Confederacy was composed of ten States, comprehending more than eight millions of inhabitants. The colored race remained submissive, and although they were not used as fighting men, their labor was for a long time a safe basis on which to rely for the production of the great staples of those States. The Confederate Government, well organized, was seated at Richmond. The Confederate troops, under skilful leaders, were strongly intrenched at Manassas and at Yorktown. That historic town, situated on the Virginia side of the York River, just above the point where it begins to widen out into Chesapeake Bay, was strongly fortified. It was there that McClellan expected and determined to fight the first great battle of the war. It was there that the Confederates, as soon as he should move in that direction, would have to concentrate their main strength, and to put forth all their power of resistance. Now was manifest, to all minds capable of sound military judgment, the wisdom of McClellan's purpose in embarking his army by water and transferring it upon the Peninsula, so as to turn Yorktown, crush the enemy there, and

then advance upon Richmond. He had left Washington well surrounded by fortifications, and had left sufficient troops, if properly handled, to secure its safety.

It was a reasonable and a sound calculation that the enemy could not advance upon Washington from Manassas, so as to put it in serious danger, if those who were charged with its defence should be competent to their work, for the enemy would have all that he could do at Yorktown, and elsewhere on the Peninsula. But in order to carry out this plan of operations, and force the Confederates to a decisive battle between the York and the James Rivers, it was, of course, necessary that every part of McClellan's plan should be carried out, just as he had made it. I shall not discuss the difference of views in regard to the best line of movement which occurred between the President and some of his advisers and McClellan before the army was moved, because McClellan's plan was the one that was at length sanctioned by the President, and because, when it had been sanctioned, everything should have been done according to the judgment of the General who was to conduct the campaign and to be responsible for it. For I hold it to be a position which history should not fail to assert, that a Government, composed of

mere civilians, assisted by no military adviser whose opinion was to be compared to that of the General charged with a great campaign, was bound by every consideration of prudence and wisdom to leave that General to exercise his own judgment, and to supply him with every possible means of success. The reverse of this was just what was done; and I shall now, therefore, unhesitatingly state the conclusion which any honest historian must draw. It is that while President Lincoln was most anxious for McClellan's success and for the quickest possible termination of the war, he was surrounded and controlled by a cabal who were determined that McClellan should not succeed, and that the war should not be ended during that summer. The proof of this is direct and conclusive. It is not merely a conclusion from circumstantial evidence. It is as demonstrable as any proposition that has ever, in any history of a great war, arisen for determination. The evidence that substantiates it extends through a period of just six months, and a large part of it consists in the known conduct of individuals, and in a series of facts which all converge into one conclusion, and end in the final consummation of the intended purpose.

I shall group this evidence under the following heads: Premising that everything that the President did or failed to do, that was contrary to McClellan's just expectations, and the necessities of the case, was done or omitted by him reluctantly, and because he was either misled or mistaken. He was so surrounded by malevolent influences that he could not help doing wrong.

1st. When McClellan left Washington to lead his army upon the Peninsula, he was General-in-Chief, and had been for five months. All his plans in reference to Richmond were connected with his plans for the prosecution of the war throughout the South and South-west, and if the latter were to be withdrawn from his control, they should have been placed under the control of the ablest General within the reach of the Government. Instead of this, on the 11th of March, when McClellan was at Fairfax Court House, an Executive Order was issued relieving him from all command excepting that of the Department of the Potomac; constituting the Department of the Mississippi, and making General Halleck its commander, and constituting the country west of the Department of the Potomac and east of the Department of the Mississippi as the Mountain Department, and appointing to it General Fre-

mont. The order appointed no one General-in-Chief over all the armies, and consequently the military operations were left under the control of the Secretary of War, a mere civilian, without any military experience, and at this time an active enemy of McClellan. This was one of the steps taken to tie McClellan's hands, in order to secure the failure of his coming campaign in Virginia. It broke that unity of action which it was his purpose to enforce in the operations of the different armies in the field, and it consequently changed the conditions of the campaign in Virginia.

2d. On the 3d of April, ten days after McClellan left Washington, Mr. Stanton issued a General Order closing all the recruiting depots for volunteers throughout the country, and stopping all recruiting. If he was ignorant of the fact that an army in the field must inevitably meet with losses under the most favorable circumstances, and that to stop all supplies of men at such a juncture is an unpardonable folly, he was unfit for his place. If he did know this, he committed a crime for which, under some governments, he would have been called to account, and might have had to answer with his head. History must choose between the alternatives of ignorance and blindness on one hand, and knowledge, with malice and treachery, on the

other. It is difficult to conceive how the President was led into this folly, if he was consulted before the order was issued. It said, in substance, to McClellan: No matter what may be the force of the enemy, no matter what losses you may meet with in battle or by disease, not another man shall be given you more than those you now have. Imagine that a similar order had been issued when General Grant, three years afterward, was "fighting it out on that line all summer," and that instead of being supplied with an endless succession of fresh troops, arriving as fast as the head of his columns was cut off by the enemy, he had been told: Fight it out with what you have, not another man shall come to you. Can you imagine that he would ever have forced Lee to surrender?

3d. Before McClellan left Washington, he was *assured*—I use the word in its strongest meaning—1st. That he should have Blenker's German Division, consisting of about 10,000 men; 2d. That the first army corps, headed by McDowell, should constitute part of his army and be under his command; 3d. That he might draw 10,000 men from General Wool's command at Fortress Monroe. He reached that post on the 2d of April, fully believing and authorized to believe that he would have an

active army of 156,000, the full control of his base of operations, and efficient support from the navy. On the 3d he received a telegram from the Adjutant-General, stating that, by the President's order, he was deprived of all control over General Wool and the troops of his command, and forbidden to detach any of them without General Wool's sanction. On the 4th of April, another order reached him, which detached McDowell's corps from the force under his immediate command, and placed McDowell under the direction of the Secretary of War. When this astonishing order came to McClellan, the leading division of several of his columns was under a hot artillery fire, and the skirmishers of the third corps were engaged in fighting. The General heard of the withdrawal of Blenker's Division on the 31st of March, by the note of apology which the President sent to him just as he was embarking for the Peninsula. In conversation on that same day, the President assured him that *no other troops* should be withdrawn from his command. These three several reductions of his force left him, instead of an army of 156,000 men under his immediate command, with only 85,000, for operations on the Peninsula; and instead of the control of all the forces, supplies and operations from the Atlantic to the Alleghanies, and from the line of North Caro-

lina to New York, he was reduced to a strip of ground bounded on the west by the railroad from Fredericksburg to Richmond, on the south by the James, from Richmond to the mouth of the Appomattox, on the east by a curved line from the mouth of Appomattox to the Chickahominy; thence to the White House on the Pamunkey; thence through King and Queen Court House to a point on the Rappahannock, about two miles above Urbana, and thence to the mouth of the Potomac, the northern boundary being the Potomac from the mouth of Acquia Creek downward. His bases of operation at Washington and Fortress Monroe were both removed from his command, and he was left simply with his 85,000 men and without control of the ground until he passed beyond White House. Had he not, then, after all that had transpired, only too good reason to believe that the Secretary of War was inimical to him, and did not desire his success? If it was necessary, or was believed to be necessary, to displace McClellan from the control of all the operations throughout the seceded States, why was not some other General substituted in his place? Why did the Secretary of War retain in his own hands the power not only to direct what was to be done on the whole theatre of the war, but the power to control McClellan in

the sphere to which he was now reduced, without the Secretary's being guided by the judgment of any military man as General-in-Chief? You must look for the answer in the accumulating proof of a settled purpose to prevent McClellan's success. This state of affairs continued down to the middle of July, and through the whole of that three months the evidence of Stanton's hostility to McClellan, and of his duplicity, is accumulating until he makes Halleck General-in-Chief, and thus secures an ally in his warfare on McClellan—an ally whom he could make do anything that he pleased. General Halleck was a man of very little force of character, and with only a theoretical knowledge of the art of war. Stanton was a man of indomitable force of will, and, although he had no military knowledge whatever, he had an unbounded self-confidence.

4th. It is in proof, that Mr. Stanton, and Mr. Chase, at a later period, when Washington was in imminent peril after the second Bull Run, would have preferred to see the capital fall into the hands of the enemy rather than have it saved by McClellan; and nothing but Mr. Lincoln's firmness and his confidence in McClellan's ability to save it, seconded by McClellan's prompt acceptance of the command, stood between the capture of the city

and the flight of the Government on the one hand, and the repulse of the enemy on the other.* But to return to Yorktown.

5th. McClellan's original plan of storming Yorktown was one of the most admirable pieces of strategy that is recorded anywhere in military history; and yet, like all really great strategical operations, it was simple, because it was based upon obvious considerations. But its success depended, of course, upon an unchanged situation of the General and his army. It comprehended first the movement of McDowell's corps as an attacking force above the town; second, the ascent of the York River by the gun-boats then in the lower Chesapeake, until they should pass the heavy batteries of the enemy on the water side of the town, and then take up a position from which they could throw their shells across the isthmus upon the retreating troops of the Confederates; third, upon a simultaneous attack by McClellan in person upon the strong lines of defence south of the town, which stretched across the Peninsula, and which were regarded by McClellan and his best officers as the most formidable line of works that were ever erected for defensive purposes. But the with-

* See note at the end of this Address.

drawal of the First Corps from McClellan's command, the refusal of the naval commander to risk his vessels against the fire from the batteries on the water side of the town, the diminution of McClellan's active forces by the withdrawal of Blencker's division, and the taking of Fortress Monroe out of his command, destroyed the whole plan. Instead of storming Yorktown, McClellan now had to invest it by a regular siege. In one month he went over it, drove the Confederate forces out of it, pursued them in their retreat, and prepared to advance on Richmond. All the while the presses of the North, stimulated by his enemies in Washington, resounded with an outcry against his slowness, and the people could not or would not see how he had been crippled. Having been so crippled, he might have asked to be relieved; but you must remember that from the time when he landed on the Peninsula down to the finding of a new base on the James, at Harrison's Landing, he and his army were almost constantly under fire; his troops were devoted to him beyond all parallel in our military history, or in any history since that of the first Napoleon. He had created that splendid army. To ask to be relieved under such circumstances was out of the question. He knew now what an enemy he had left behind him in

Washington ; but he loved his country, and he could not see — nor could any man see — who was fit to succeed him in the command of that army which the people expected would take Richmond, but which the radical leaders in Washington had determined should not be taken *then*. In that high order of military men to which McClellan belonged, it was no uncommon thing to subordinate all love of self to the public interest, and to accept or remain in the most unpleasant and painful situations from a sense of duty. Meade was such a man ; and so, I am persuaded, was blunt old Hooker, although he was not equal to the command that was put upon him later, and which he certainly does not appear to have sought.

I shall not on this occasion enter upon a detailed description of McClellan's operations by which he expected to take Richmond after having driven the Confederates out of Yorktown. Every one is aware that his success depended first upon the advance of McDowell's Corps to a position where he would form a junction with McClellan's right wing, and be placed under McClellan's command ; second, upon McClellan's being supplied with all the re-enforcements which he required that were within the reach of the Government, and as fast as he called for them. In both respects he was

baffled by the conduct of the authorities in Washington, and it is now certain that in both respects he was so baffled not because the President but because the radical leaders in the President's party did not mean that McClellan should end the war. You should examine the evidence by observing that he was ordered to extend his right wing to a considerable distance to the north so as to effect the junction with McDowell; and that the main body of his own army rested on or near the Chickahominy River. McDowell's forward movement was arrested by orders from Washington, and he never was placed under McClellan's command. "It was," says McClellan, "rendered impossible for the enemy to communicate by rail with Fredericksburg, or with Jackson via Gordonsville, except by the very circuitous route of Lynchburg, and the road was left entirely open for the advance of McDowell had he been permitted to join the Army of the Potomac. His withdrawal towards Front Royal was, in my judgment, a serious and fatal error; he could do no good in that direction, while, had he been permitted to carry out the orders of May 17, the united forces would have driven the enemy within the immediate entrenchments of Richmond before Jackson could have returned to its succor, and probably

would have gained possession promptly of that place.

"It is very clear that the arrangements I directed in March and on the 1st of April for the defence of Washington and the Shenandoah would have proved ample to check Jackson without delaying the advance of McDowell. The total disregard of these instructions led to the actual condition of affairs.

"On the 25th of May, McDowell's advance was eight miles beyond Fredericksburg. If he had marched on the 26th, as first ordered, he would have found no enemy in his front until he reached the South Anna, on the 27th or early on the 28th. For his telegram of the 25th shows that they had hastily fallen back during the night of the 24th and 25th, and Porter found them at Hanover Court House and Ashland on the 27th; so that, as things were, Porter's division alone would have insured McDowell's junction with the Army of the Potomac without the slightest difficulty."

The 26th of June was the day which McClellan had fixed for his final advance on Richmond. McDowell was not permitted to join him, and the re-enforcements which he had repeatedly and earnestly called for had been withheld. The enemy, in greatly superior force, took advantage of his

situation, and attacked him on his right. He was thus compelled to turn his attention to the protection of his communications and depots of supply. "This," he says in his report, "was a bitter confirmation of the military judgment which had been reiterated to my military superiors from the inception and through the progress of the Peninsular campaign." Then followed THE SEVEN DAYS, through which he fought his way for a change of base to the James River, in a series of desperate conflicts, in every one of which the Confederates were baffled, until, on the night of the 3d of July, the last of the wagon-trains reached the new base at Harrison's Landing, and the wearied Army of the Potomac, which had battled with such heroic endurance under his skilful guidance, rested in security, protected by their own batteries and the gun-boats which lay in the river. The three following days were occupied by McClellan in strengthening and guarding his position, and in a fruitless telegraphic correspondence with the President, to convince the latter that re-enforcements ought to be sent to him, so that he could advance on Richmond from the James.

As a military question, the whole matter was perfectly plain. It was simply whether by allowing McClellan to advance on Richmond from the

James the enemy should be confined to the defence of his capital, or whether by withdrawing McClellan's army from the James, and then withdrawing its command from him, the enemy should be invited to advance on Washington and fight a great battle in front of that city, which would, in all probability, fall into his hands if the Federal forces should be defeated. Although there was no room for rational doubt which of these alternatives should be adopted, it was determined that the Army of the Potomac should be withdrawn to the front of the Federal capital; and this withdrawal, against McClellan's earnest remonstrance, was so determined and so managed by the Secretary of War and General Halleck, the General-in-Chief, that after McClellan's army had been transferred to the neighborhood of the city, its forces were withdrawn from his command and placed under the command of General Pope, along with the forces called the Army of Virginia; leaving McClellan in his tent at Alexandria, with a body-guard of a few wounded men, as a spectacle of a disgraced man, to be looked at and jeered at by the nation.

You have all heard or read of the second Bull Run, where the rout and overthrow of the Federal forces were complete, and you know that on that

field McClellan was not permitted to lead even a regiment, although he begged to be at least allowed to be present and thus to stimulate and encourage the troops who adored him.

But in a few short and disastrous hours all eyes were turned towards him. The hounds of the press ceased their barking and shut their mouths; the nation held its breath, asking, and trembling as it asked, "Where is McClellan?" The soldiers, stung by defeat, as they poured on towards the capital, asked "Where is Little Mac? Why has he been taken from us? What is to be done now?" The melancholy and disgraceful day of the second Bull Run was the 1st of September; the night of that day saw 50,000 stragglers on the roads leading into Washington; the afternoon of the next day saw General Pope and General McDowell riding together in the middle of a regiment of cavalry in full retreat, and the victorious Confederates were pressing on their rear guard. Where was McClellan?

At half-past seven o'clock in the morning of the 2d, the door-bell of his house in Washington was rung by a gentleman whose nerves were strung to their utmost tension. It was President Lincoln, accompanied by General Halleck. They were ushered into the parlor. Never was there

such a situation. The President had come to learn of what fibre was made the patriotism of the General who had been so treated. Mr. Lincoln may have had reasons of his own for compunction and regret ; but he was a man equal to the painful duty which he had come to discharge. It was to ask McClellan to save the capital and the nation. The President was deeply moved ; he knew the whole peril, and he knew the man to whom he had to appeal. "Will you," he asked, "dare you, take the command under these circumstances ? The risk is very great — we may all have to fly — the probability is that Washington cannot be saved." "I stake my head on its safety," replied McClellan, "and will do whatever you bid me." He asked for no written orders — he stipulated for nothing for himself — he did not even think, as he might, and perhaps should, have thought, of providing, in self-defence, that some part of this immense responsibility should be borne by some one else. There was no one else that could have borne a feather's weight of it.

I cannot follow him through that day and the succeeding night ; I cannot now describe to you how instantly everything was changed as soon as the troops knew that he was again to command them ; how he posted them as they came in ; how

in twenty-four hours he secured the safety of the city, and how the enemy, learning that he was again in command, turned northward and directed his march to the upper waters of the Potomac. There he was followed by McClellan, with a celerity of movement that is simply wonderful, considering that he had to reconstruct and refit many of the organizations of a lately defeated army.

McClellan's movements northward had to be made carefully so as not to uncover Washington before the enemy's position and plans were developed, but he was constantly impeded by General Halleck's cautions not to be too precipitate. On the 10th of September he learned from his scouts that Lee's army was probably in the vicinity of Frederick. On the 13th an order issued by General Lee on the 9th fell into McClellan's hands. It revealed the whole of Lee's plans. On the 14th the battle of South Mountain occurred, in which the Confederates were defeated, with a great loss in killed and wounded, and 1500 prisoners were taken. The aggregate Federal loss was 1568. McClellan pressed forward his army in pursuit of the enemy, and on the 17th, fifteen days after he had resumed the command of the Army of the Potomac, the long and desperately contested battle of Antietam ended in the defeat

of the Confederates. On the next night the Confederate Army recrossed the Potomac into Virginia, leaving 2700 of their dead unburied on the field. 13 guns ; 39 colors ; upward of 15,000 stand of small arms, and more than 6000 prisoners, were captured by the Federals in the three battles of South Mountain, Crampton's Gap, and Antietam, without losing a single gun or a single color. The grand aggregate of the Federal killed, wounded, and missing in the battle of Antietam was 12,469. The total number of the Federal forces was 87,164 men. The forces of the enemy were a good deal larger.

The battle of Antietam was not only one of the great historic battles of the war, but the repulse of Lee across the Potomac secured Washington a second time. If Lee had triumphed over McClellan in that battle, he could have marched as he pleased on Washington ; and there is no reason to suppose that those who were in charge of its defence could have prevented its capture. Nowhere east of the Alleghanies was there another organized force that could have arrested Lee's march through an undevastated country, levying tribute as he went along from populous and wealthy cities.

On the 1st of October, President Lincoln came

to McClellan's headquarters, near the field of Antietam, and remained there three days. He rode over the field, and made himself fully acquainted with the details of the battle and the condition of the army. He told McClellan that he had formerly believed that he was too slow, but that he now saw his mistake, that he was the only general in the service who could handle a large army, that he had his absolute and entire confidence, that he must go on and do what he thought right, move when he was ready and not before, and when he moved do as he thought best; that he must make his mind easy, that he should not be removed from the command, and that he should have his full and unqualified support.* He promised that the destitute condition of the army should be remedied as quickly as practicable; but that condition was not remedied for more than three weeks after the President's return to Washington, so that the army could have been safely marched upon a new and aggressive campaign in the enemy's country any earlier than it

* I have made this statement just as it was given to me by General McClellan himself in 1880, shortly before I published it in an article in the *North American Review*. I read it to him before it was printed, and he confirmed it. Compare "McClellan's Own Story," pp. 627-628, and "McClellan's Last Service to the Republic," by the author of this address, New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1885.

was. But, although the President returned to Washington from the field of Antietam as firm in his support of McClellan as it was in his nature to be in regard to anything, McClellan's enemies in the Cabinet began to work anew. Concealment, misrepresentation, and falsehood were all resorted to to get up the pretext for disputing McClellan's repeated assertions that his army needed indispensable supplies, but subsequent revelations show that his assertions were absolutely true. He crossed the Potomac in pursuit of the Confederates on the 28th of October. Six days sufficed for the march of 50 miles from the Potomac to Warrenton after the last corps of the army had crossed; notwithstanding that heavy rains delayed the movement considerably in the beginning, and three of the corps had to wait at least one day at the crossing to complete their necessary supplies. At the end of the six days McClellan had made the different dispositions of his troops which his plans for advancing against the enemy contemplated. His headquarters were at Rector-town on the 6th of November. Just previous to this, some one had informed the radical leaders in Washington that if McClellan were allowed to fight another battle he would in all probability demolish the Confederate forces, because those

forces were so disposed that he could divide and beat them in detail. If he should then and there destroy Lee's army, it was supposed that he would become a military dictator, so powerful would he be in the applause and affections of the people of the North. This therefore was not to be allowed. A Cabinet meeting was summoned on the 5th of November. At that meeting the old story was trumped up of unnecessary delay after the battle of Antietam; false figures imposed on Secretary Seward and Mr. Montgomery Blair. They were forced to be silent. After the meeting broke up, the Secretary of War and General Halleck assisted by Mr. Chase, obtained from the President discretionary authority to displace McClellan, and at the last moment, by a haphazard choice, General Burnside was made his successor. A special messenger was instantly despatched from the War department with the order directing McClellan immediately to turn over his command to Major-General Burnside and to repair to Trenton in New Jersey, reporting on his arrival at that place for further orders. The messenger, accompanied by General Burnside, reached McClellan's tent at Rectortown at a late hour on the night of November 7. As soon as he could render all the assistance possible to General Burnside in making him understand

his plans for the campaign, McClellan started for Washington, where he did not remain an hour. He never again saw Lincoln or Stanton or Halleck. He arrived at Trenton at four o'clock in the morning of the 12th. Why was he sent there? He was not then a citizen of New Jersey; he had no connection with the city of Trenton; there was no military duty for him to perform there; there was not a Federal soldier in the place. He was sent there to disgrace him. The radical faction had triumphed; a new pressure from without had come upon Mr. Lincoln, in addition to that put upon him in his own cabinet. This was the renewed pressure for converting the war into a war for the extermination of slavery. On the 13th of September Mr. Lincoln told a deputation of clergymen from Chicago that an emancipation proclamation would be no more effective than the Pope's bull against the comet; but nine days afterward, after McClellan gained the Battle of Antietam, the President issued the proclamation.

Some of you may perhaps think that it was fortunate upon the whole that the war was not ended in the summer of 1862 even by a final and decisive victory over the Confederates by whomsoever gained, because you may suppose that in that event slavery would not have been destroyed. If you

make no account of the frightful cost of the war in blood and treasure consequent upon its prolongation after the autumn of 1862, you should still see that nothing could have saved slavery but the triumph of the Southern Confederacy. It was not a question for the people of the North whether there should be peace without any action on the subject of slavery, unless the Southern States should succeed in finally severing the Union into two nations. If McClellan could have dictated or advised the terms of peace, it is certain that he would have required, or advised the Government to require, as one of the conditions, a gradual and regulated emancipation, education of the negroes, and preparation of them for the duties and rights of citizenship. To these terms the South would probably have acceded. If Lincoln and McClellan had together dictated the settlement, they would not have differed, and the South must have acquiesced. We should have had none of the evils of the subsequent reconstruction measures, none of the enormities of sudden and uneducated negro suffrage, no violence done to the Constitution by forcing amendments upon the people of the South as a sheer act of power, and "carpetbag" rule would never have cursed Southern society. The control which the radical element of the dominant party in the North obtained over the conserva-

tives was a calamity; and one of its worst results was that it prevented the co-operation of Lincoln and McClellan, and their joint influence over the welfare of the whole country. After the final defeat and collapse of the Southern Confederacy had come, the life of President Lincoln, never so important as it was then, was terminated by the bullet of an assassin; and his successor was unable to control the radical wing of the party as Lincoln would have controlled it if McClellan had conquered in the summer of 1862. The politicians who finally destroyed Lincoln's confidence in McClellan may have had reasons which justified them to their own consciences, but history must pass upon men's reasons and their consciences. If it finds that the reasons were pretexts, that the consciences were seared by self-seeking, that the objects were gained by duplicity and by leading a patriotic ruler like Lincoln to his own and the country's injury, there is but one judgment that it can pronounce. Public men are not entitled to claim immunity from censure by asserting the purity of their motives and the wisdom of their acts. Posterity must judge both their motives and their acts, and where the judgment of history places them they must remain.

I will now put a question for which this is the appropriate time and place, and the answer to which

furnishes the key to all McClellan's political conduct subsequent to the termination of his military service. Why was it that in answer to overtures which were made to him by Mr. Lincoln, McClellan did not forego all political opposition and refuse to be a candidate for the Presidency in 1864? It certainly was not that he coveted the office; it was not because he wished again to lead the armies of the United States. It was because he believed, and his wisest friends believed, that if Mr. Lincoln were re-elected, the same causes would be in operation and the same means would be used whereby the conservative political elements would most probably be subordinated to the power of the radical forces; that inasmuch as the latter had never given up their determination to rule, they would in all probability continue, if not to rule, to hamper and obstruct Mr. Lincoln's policy. For this reason McClellan accepted the nomination that was forced upon him by the Democratic party, and which he did nothing whatever to obtain; and when it appeared that the platform promulgated by the convention of that party was one on which it was unfit for him to stand, Mr. Prime is perfectly right in saying that he did a great public service by repudiating it. He made for himself a platform on which he and his political friends who loved the Union and

meant that it should be preserved, and that the Southern secession should not finally prevail, could stand and vote. How many votes he actually received will never be known; the Secretary of War and his coadjutors took care of enough of the soldiers' vote, especially here in your great Pennsylvania, to secure his defeat, at least on the returns.

But how did McClellan bear his defeat? I had ample personal means of knowing, but I will not offer my own testimony. I prefer to read the following letter which he wrote to his mother when the result became known:

"ORANGE, NOV. 11, 1864.

"MY DEAR MOTHER, — The smoke has cleared away and we are beaten. All we can do is to accept it as the will of God, and to pray that he will so turn the hearts of our rulers that they may open a way of salvation for the country to emerge from its troubles. Personally I am glad that the dreadful responsibility of the government of this nation is not to devolve upon my shoulders. My only regret is for my country and my friends, so many of whom have suffered on account of their devotion to me. It would have been a most pleasant thing for me to have had it in my power to redress their wrongs; but that is impossible now, and I can repay them only by sincere gratitude.

"I do not believe that God can have given over our country, and although I cannot yet see the daylight, I cannot doubt that it will break forth when least expected, and I have full confidence that if we deserve to be saved He will save us.

"I sent in my resignation a few days ago and have not yet heard whether it is accepted or not. I shall now remain in private life, and I can imagine no combination of circumstances that will draw me into public life again. I feel that I have sacrificed as much for my country as any one can reasonably expect, unless I could effect some good object which no one else could, and I do not flatter myself that that can ever be the case.

"I have not yet determined on my plans, but as soon as the excitement has subsided and my resignation is accepted, I shall very promptly determine what to do. I am still young enough, strong enough, hopeful enough, to begin life anew, and have no regrets for the past because I feel that I have simply tried to do my duty to the country and to God. I never felt less regret for anything in my life than for the personal consequences of the late defeat. A great weight is removed from my shoulders, and I feel that I am once more a free citizen, as good as anybody else. As soon as things are quiet and the excitement has subsided, I shall quietly run over to Philadelphia for a few days. Have you heard from Arthur since his return to the army? I hope and trust that you will not let the state of the country worry you at all; it is in the hands of God, and in Him must we trust to carry us through. Ever, my dear mother,

"Your affectionate son,

"GEORGE B. McCLELLAN."

Just twenty-three years of private life remained for McClellan after his military life ended. They were years of great happiness and great usefulness. His resources for happiness were inexhaus-

tible ; his means of usefulness were large and varied. Some of the remaining years of his life were passed in European travel and in delightful intercourse with the most distinguished and most worthy persons of the countries that he visited. His travels extended into the East ; and never was there a man better fitted by accomplishments, knowledge, tastes, and aptitude for the benefits which foreign travel gives. He spoke many languages ; was well read in many literatures ; knew many subjects, and was constantly adding to his knowledge. He never contracted, however, the least of that feeling which makes so many Americans prefer a residence abroad ; he always returned to his own land loving it better and holding its institutions in higher estimation. He always came home when occupation awaited him or when he could make it. He was employed in various affairs, and it is, to all who loved and honored him, cause for thankfulness that he made by honorable labor a moderate but sufficient provision for his own wants and tastes and for those who were to come after him. No appeal to public or to private bounty is needful for those who were dependent on him ; and for this I shall ever feel profoundly grateful.

I need not describe the later years of his life ;

the trusts that he fulfilled ; the positions that he held. It is all known to you and it is a noble record. When his life comes finally to be written it will be acknowledged that, take him for all in all, in the sum total of his character, his various powers, his intellect, his principles, and his virtues, he was as noble a specimen of human nature as this age has produced. The fond picture which poor Ophelia drew of what her princely lover had been, when she supposed that his mind was overthrown, will, in the case of our lost McClellan, have to be greatly modified and enlarged. In that shadowy kingdom of Denmark, "the soldier's, scholar's, courtier's eye, tongue, sword," might picture "the glass of fashion and the mould of form, the expectancy and rose of the fair state." In the busy reality of our modern life, the mature and thoroughly equipped soldier, statesman, citizen, patriot, and Christian gentleman, the man of action, the man of affairs, the man of rounded and completed life and ripened wisdom and unstained escutcheon, constitutes a character to be studied with ever increasing interest, and one marked by a fame that we shall not willingly let die.

Of this man it is proposed to erect in the city of his birth a suitable memorial that shall tell the

present and future generations what he was. The sympathies of the whole country, I am sure, will be with you, and so, I hope, will be their material aid. By what ideas and accessories this object is to be accomplished so that the monument will speak to the beholder as it ought, there are two thoughts that it must embody; that he twice saved the capital of the nation from falling into the hands of those who, if they had spared its buildings, would have destroyed its Government, and that he created the noblest army that up to that time the United States had ever possessed.

In that elaborate and not wholly inconsistent rhapsody of Emanuel Swedenborg in which he has described the structure of heaven and the condition of its inhabitants, with many of whom he tells us he had again and again conversed, we learn that there is an inner and celestial kingdom, where, from the immediate presence of the Lord, as from a central sun, emanate the light and heat of Divine Love and Truth; whose warmth and brilliancy penetrate most directly the spirits of those who were once men but who have become angels. There they are perpetually turned to the everlasting source of the Divine effulgence, and their occupations appear to be the never-ending reception of its influence. The Christian soldier of

whom I have been speaking had a different conception of the other world; one that would be likely to be entertained by a man who had found in this life the true meaning of work, when done with fidelity to God and to fellow-men. Writing, in 1879, in answer to a pleasant note from a very early friend about making a voyage to "the land where it is always afternoon," he said: "I fancy, Sam, that we will never reach that land where it is always afternoon, in any ship built by mortal hands. Our fate is to work and still to work as long as there is any work left in us; and I do not doubt that it is best, for I can't help thinking that when we reach that other and far better land we shall still have work to do throughout the long ages, only we shall then see as we go on that it is all done for the Master and under his own eye; and we will like it and never grow weary of it, as we often do here when we don't see clearly to what end we are working and our work brings us in contact with all sorts of men and things not pleasant to rub against. I suppose that the more we work here the better we shall be trained for that other work which after all is the great end towards which we move or ought to be moving. Well, I did not start out to sermonize, but somehow or other your letter started my thoughts in

that direction. I would like to take 'the belongings' and sail for that quiet land; but we will have to wait some little time yet, and I suppose each one will reach it alone and the first arrived wait for the others." There we may believe that he is now, and there all who have done their work in this world, whatsoever it may have been, as he did his, may expect to find continued employment under the Master's eye.

Note on Secretary Stanton's order of September 2, 1862, respecting the contents of the Washington Arsenal.

One can only conjecture how the Confederates would have treated Washington if it had fallen into their hands. Some of their authorities have since said that it was never their policy to seize the Federal capital, but only to keep up a perpetual menace. If General Lee, however, had triumphed at Antietam, he would have had both Washington and Baltimore in his power, and probably would have felt compelled to take them. It is a very significant fact that after Pope's defeat at the Second Bull Run, one of the public establishments in Washington — at this moment the

most important of all — was in imminent danger from the Federal Secretary of War himself. At that time General Ripley was Chief of Ordnance; Colonel (afterwards General) George D. Ramsay was Commandant of the Washington arsenal. On the 2d of September, Mr. Stanton gave a verbal order to General Ripley to ship everything from the arsenal forthwith to New York. General Ripley communicated this order to Colonel Ramsay, by whom it would have to be executed. Ramsay was an intimate friend of Mr. James C. Welling, then one of the editors of the *National Intelligencer*, and now widely known as President of Columbia University in Washington. He went immediately to Welling's office, told him of the order confidentially, said that he should not obey it, and that, as he might thereafter be called to account for not obeying an order of the Secretary of War, he wished that there might be a witness of the reasons that governed him. These were that to dismantle the arsenal and send away the arms and munitions of war at that moment would terribly alarm the people of the North, and they would conclude that the capital could not be saved. Mr. Welling replied that he (Colonel Ramsay) was taking a fearful risk, in disobeying an order of the Secretary, but that patriotic con-

siderations required him to take that risk. This conversation occurred before Ramsay knew that the President had charged General McClellan with the defence of the city. Between one and two o'clock of that day McClellan sent to Halleck, General-in-Chief, the following note:

SEPTEMBER 2 [1862], 1.20 P. M.

MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK.

MY DEAR HALLECK,—The ordnance officer (Lieutenant Porter) informs me that General Ripley says that he has just received an order from the Secretary of War to ship everything from this arsenal to New York.

I had sent to General Ripley to learn what small arms were here, so that I might be prepared to arm stragglers, etc. I do not think this order ought to be carried out so promptly. I do not despair of saving the capital. Better destroy all there is there at the eleventh hour than send them off now. Will you not say something as to this?

In haste, truly yours,

GEO. B. MCCLELLAN.

I am pushing things through, and shall have everything we have in readiness. McC.

General Halleck answered this note as follows:

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,

WASHINGTON, September 2, 1862.

MAJOR-GENERAL MCCLELLAN, Washington, D. C.

GENERAL,—At least 50,000 or 60,000 arms will be left, and a large number of pieces of artillery.

H. W. HALLECK, *General-in-Chief*.

[See volume xii., part iii., War Records, pp. 802, 805.]

From this answer, it is apparent that General Halleck had not taken, and would not take, any steps to have the order countermanded, or to prevent its being carried out. He simply informs McClellan that there will be left fifty or sixty thousand arms and some pieces of artillery; all the other vast *materiel*, so far as depended on him, would be sent off.

It would be a matter of some interest to know at what precise time on that day Mr. Stanton gave this order to General Ripley. The President and General Halleck were at McClellan's house at half-past seven o'clock on that morning, and McClellan then and there accepted the command, which the President begged him to take. It appears that there was a stated cabinet meeting on that day, and that when Mr. Stanton entered the room, before the President came in, he said that *he had just learned* from General Halleck that the President had placed McClellan in command of the forces in Washington. When the President came in and confirmed this information, there was a scene, in which Mr. Stanton, as he usually became when excited, was insolent to the President. This is evident from the account given by Mr. Chase and Mr. Gideon Welles, as quoted by Mr. Prime ("McClellan's Own Story," pp. 544,

545). Mr. Chase, too, joined in remonstrating against the President's action, and Mr. Lincoln was so distressed by the opposition of the two Secretaries that he said he would *gladly resign his office*. But he did not recede from his position in regard to McClellan; and this, doubtless, made Mr. Stanton and Mr. Chase the more angry. If, now, we recollect that this was a regular cabinet day, that for a long period of time the stated cabinet meetings were held at twelve o'clock, as they have since been, and then compare the hour at which McClellan dated his note to Halleck, informing him that Lieutenant Porter had brought information that General Ripley had said he *had just received* the Secretary's order to ship everything in the arsenal to New York, the inference seems to be irresistible that Mr. Stanton gave the order to General Ripley after he left the cabinet meeting, and gave it in a condition of violent anger because McClellan had been put in command. Mr. Stanton may have heard of the President's interview with McClellan at a much earlier hour than twelve o'clock, and it is probable that he had. But whether he gave the order to General Ripley before or after the cabinet meeting, his hostility to McClellan made the *animus* of the order, in either case, a great deal more than a

mistaken judgment as to the precautions proper to be taken in order to prevent the enemy from having the benefit of what the arsenal contained. How soon the President heard of this order it is perhaps now impossible to ascertain. But he knew of it before the following morning; and feeling great anxiety to see for himself what had been done, he drove (on the 3d) to the arsenal, saw Colonel Ramsay, learned from him that nothing had been sent away, and thanked him very warmly for taking the responsibility of disobeying the Secretary of War. Had it not been for Colonel Ramsay's course, McClellan must have fought the battle of Antietam, if he had ever fought it at all, with troops very ill supplied with the necessary arms and munitions.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00023563551

